



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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NATIVE PLANT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES ON EASTERN SHORE

RICHMOND, VA. – The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality is launching a native plant campaign on the Eastern Shore with a kick-off event on Friday, April 24, 2009, in Willis Wharf.

Local government officials, and community leaders from Accomack and Northampton counties, are invited to attend the “Plant Eastern Shore Natives” campaign kick-off, which will include the final planting of a native plant demonstration landscape, a raffle for native plants, exhibits and comments by Plant ES Natives campaign partners. The event begins at 3 p.m. at the Wildlife Observation Deck in Willis Wharf harbor off Route 603.

The campaign is a multi-year effort that urges residents to look for the “Plant ES Natives” plant tag on their next visit to an Accomack or Northampton garden center. Components of the campaign include an online plant guide for Accomack and Northampton; radio ads; demonstration landscapes; garden center banners; decals; and lapel pins to be worn by community leaders who carry the campaign message into the community.

Eastern Shore native plants are encouraged because they have been part of the shore’s local ecology since before John Smith’s landing. They are adapted to the shore’s local soils and climate conditions, resulting in many benefits to the region, its residents and migratory birds, including:

- Generally require less watering and fertilizing than non-natives and are less susceptible to drought conditions. Less watering means conserving drinkable water supplies for non-watering uses.
- Are often more resistant to insects and disease and thus less likely to need pesticides that may leach into water supplies or run off into shellfish aquaculture farms.
- Provide critical habitat and food for the millions of migratory birds that rely on Virginia’s Eastern Shore as a rest stop each spring and fall.
- Help preserve the diversity, beauty and function of the shore’s natural ecosystems.

The campaign is initiated by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Office at DEQ along with many partner organizations as part of the Virginia Seaside Heritage Program.

To learn more about the campaign and how these native plants are “shore beautiful,” visit www.deq.virginia.gov/coastal/go-native.html or contact Virginia Witmer or Laura McKay of the Coastal Zone Management Program, (804) 698-4320, or vgwitmer@deq.virginia.gov or lbmckay@deq.virginia.gov.

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